



**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY,  
MURFREESBORO, TN**

**ALABAMA BLACK SACRED HARP COLLECTION**

**88-020**

**89-098**

**91-079**

**Creator:**

Jackson, H.J.

**Type of Material:**

Sound Recordings, Audio Visual Material, Photographs

**Physical Description:**

1.0 linear feet, including audio cassettes, video cassettes, and photographs

5 analog cassette tapes (TCA 0072A/E)

3 digital audio cassette tapes (TCD 0072A/C)

3 1/2" video cassette tapes (VCH 0072A/C)

78 black and white photographs, 56 negatives

**Languages:**

English

**Dates:**

1986, 1988, 1990

**Abstract (Descriptive Summary):**

This collection consists of two series of material related to and documenting the 1988 shape note Alabama Black Sacred Harp Singing Convention held in Dozier, Alabama, and currently led by H. J. Jackson, son of Judge Jackson, author of *The Colored Sacred Harp*.

**Access/Restrictions:**

The collection is open for research use. *All materials in this collection are subject to standard national and international copyright laws. Center staff are able to assist with copyright questions for this material.*

**Preferred Citation:** (Box Number, Folder Number/Name), Alabama Black Sacred Harp Collection, 88-020, Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

Materials were given by H.J. Jackson in three installments, the first in October of 1988 where materials were donated as well as purchased by the Center. The second installment was in June of 1990, where the material was Center-generated. The third installment was donated in June of 1992.

The four analog field recordings (TCA 0072A/E) were made by Center audio archivist Bruce Nemerov, September 1988; the digital master tapes (TCD 0072A/C) and analog cassette reference copies thereof were made in the Center lab from the field recordings at a later date. The fifth analog cassette tape (TCA 0072E) and all three video cassette tapes were made from originals lent for copying by H.J. Jackson of Ozark, AL. The photographs were made by James Bryan in September 1988.

**Subjects/Index Terms:**

Jackson, J. (Judge), 1883-1958  
Colored sacred harp  
Shape note singing--Alabama  
African Americans--Alabama

**Agency History/Biographical Sketch:**

Judge J. Jackson (March 12, 1883, Montgomery County, Alabama - April 7, 1958, Ozark, Alabama) was an American sacred harp composer, songwriter, and educator. His 1934 publication *The Colored Sacred Harp* was later recognized by scholars such as Doris Dyen and New Grove writer Joe Dan Boyd as an important document of early twentieth-century shape note singing practice.

Jackson was raised in a family of sharecroppers and obtained little formal education as a child. When he was sixteen years old, he left home and took work as a farmhand in Dale County, Alabama, where he settled and eventually earned enough to become a farmer and landowner on his own. He took an interest in the Sacred Harp tradition around the time he moved to Dale County, but his new employer would not allow him to attend the local singing schools, so he learned the technique from his peers instead. He was baptized into Christianity in 1902 and also married that year, and in 1904 began composing lyrics to shape note songs. By the early 1920s, he had moved on to teaching and composing Sacred Harp music, in addition to organizing conventions for the music in the southeast United States.

In 1934, during the Great Depression, Jackson self-published a 77-song compilation titled *The Colored Sacred Harp*, which included 18 of his own compositions (17 both words and music, and one music only) and 24 pieces he altered or arranged. Among the pieces in this collection is the Jackson composition "My Mother's Gone," which was eventually adopted into the Cooper revision in the late twentieth century. To finance the publication of *The Colored Sacred Harp*, Jackson and an associate, Bishop J.D. Walker, paid out of pocket to print 1,000 copies of the text; Jackson then sold the book door-to-door and via singing conventions and educational programs.- Wikipedia contributors. "Judge Jackson." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 28 Mar. 2023. Web.

**Scope and Content:**

This collection consists of two series of material related to and documenting the 1988 shape note Alabama Black Sacred Harp Singing Convention held in Dozier, Alabama, and currently led by H. J. Jackson, son of Judge Jackson, author of *The Colored Sacred Harp*.

**Arrangement:**

Arranged in 2 series: 1. Field recordings of the Alabama Sacred Harp Singing Convention. 2. Audio visual materials from H.J. Jackson.

**Series Description:****Series I**

Consists of analog audio cassette field recordings (TCA 0072A D) of the sing held 24 25 September 1988 and interviews with participants made by Center audio archivist Bruce Nemerov; photographs of the sing made by James Bryan; and digital audio cassette tapes of the music (TCD 0072A B) and interviews (TCD 0072C) in the field recordings made by Nemerov in the Center lab at a later date. Logs of the songs performed and of the persons interviewed and subjects of discussion on this second set of tapes are available in paper form and in the reading room of the Center. Please contact Center for Popular Music staff for these materials

**Series II**

Consists of material lent for copying by H.J. Jackson, including an audio cassette tape (TCA 0072E) of an interview with/performance by Jackson and the sacred harp singers by WOOF AM (Dothan, AL), 18 September 1988; a video cassette tape (VCH 0072A) of the Jackson Memorial Sing in April 1986; a video cassette tape (VCH 0072B) of an interview with/performance by Jackson and the singers on "Focus", a program produced by WSFA TV (Montgomery, AL) in April 1986; and a video cassette tape (VCH 0072C) of a program "Fa so la: The Sounds of Faith", produced by the University of Alabama TV Services and aired in March 1990, which includes a sing held at a church in Ozark AL and the dedication of a monument to Judge Jackson following a sing.

**Collection Contents (Box/Folder List):****Box # Folder #****Box 1**

Folder 1	78 black and white photographs, 56 negatives
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**Materials Cataloged Separately:**

Copies of *The Colored Sacred Harp* by J. Jackson and of *B.F. White Sacred Harp*, Cooper Revision, received with these materials, were transferred to the librarian and are filed with general collection scores.

**Location:**

Audio visual materials are filed by tape number in the audio-visual archives. The photographs are filed with other small manuscript collections by accession number 88-020.

**Related Materials:**

Other Sacred Harp related materials in the Center collections are searchable through the catalog.

Processed by Ellen Garrison, June 1992  
Revised by Rachel K. Morris, June 2011  
Updated Olivia M Beaudry, CA January 2024